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## Bush on the CIA

George Bush assumed the directorship of the Central Intelligence Agency just six weeks ago; before that, he served as the American representative to the People's Republic of China. There are overlapping aspects to the two posts — not many, but enough to argue against accusations that Bush has traveled from night to day. Still, it is probably fair to say that he has moved from night to dawn.

Accordingly, Bush might reasonably have been expected to dig in at the CIA for quite a while before functioning as the agency's highest-ranked advocate. Minor details, such as unpacking bags and shifting the contents of desks, require a certain amount of time; major details, such as mastering the job and taking effective control of the agency, require considerably more time. Six weeks into his new assignment, Bush by rights should have been making a measurable but not magical amount of progress at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia.



BUSH

Instead, he was in Greensboro attending the celebration of the Battle of Guilford Courthouse, and telling somewhat stunned spectators about the glories of the CIA. Calling the agency "vital to freedom," Bush asserted that CIA abuses had been "rooted out . . . and put [to] an end" by the agency itself "before they were publicly revealed." Bush also contended that public disclosure and congressional oversight are fine, but only within limits: "There are certain pieces of information that must not be divulged — and they won't be. I don't think that the American people really want reckless disclosure."

Then Bush pulled out the ultimate stop: "I wish you could have met the son of Richard Welch, our station chief in Greece who was gunned down following disclosure of his name by people bent on destroying the CIA. This young man knew well that his father had died for a cause in which he deeply believed." Bush spoke with sincerity, and the profundity of his feelings should not be challenged.

But the wisdom of saying what he said when he said it is an entirely different matter. He not only gave the agency's perception of the recent past, but did so in terms befitting the oldest of agency "old boys." A year or two from now, that might have been acceptable, but such a performance this early in the game suggests that Bush's loyalties are easily formed, if not downright pliable.

That in turn calls into question the whole purpose of bringing Bush back from Peking. By all accounts, he was supposed to restore the CIA to its former preeminence as a responsible intelligence-gathering organization. He was not brought back to become a public relations man for the agency before he had even mastered the floor plan at CIA headquarters. Of course, Bush may have effected his transition between posts and completed his mission in just six weeks. If so, he might want to ask for his old job back — the seat's still warm.